

*WASHINGTON D.C. (November 2, 2011) – Today, Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) released the following statement in a **Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee hearing on insurance coverage for women’s preventive health services including contraception:***

“The attention this Committee has focused – and continues to focus – on the private lives of women makes clear that one of the goals of the majority is to end access – not just to abortions – but to family planning.

I fought for and will continue to fight for the guidelines adopted by the administration – after an exhaustive and thorough scientific review by the IOM – to ensure insurance coverage of preventive services for women. It is no secret that substantial public health benefits and cost savings emerge when preventive services, including family planning, are accessible and affordable.

As patients, caregivers, and as workers who still earn less than men, women have a particular stake in ensuring insurance coverage of prescription contraceptives and other preventive services.

The new guidelines on insurance coverage of preventive services for women should apply to all women – regardless of where they work. Allowing employers to exempt themselves from providing prescription contraceptives for their employees is counterproductive, unfair, and paternalistic.

Why should the conscience of an employer trump a woman’s conscience?

Why should an employer decide for a woman whether she can access the health care services that she and her doctor decide are necessary?

Why are we talking about allowing some employers to put up a barrier to access at a time when women are struggling to afford and access health care?

It never used to be that family planning was considered a partisan issue and it never used to be that family planning was equated with abortion. My, how things have changed – today, the full continuum of reproductive health care is under assault. This message is being heard by women far and wide and the notion of limiting access to family planning will be rejected by all women – regardless of race, economics, and religion.

It is inconceivable to me, in the year 2011, that contraception has become controversial.

Since virtually all women use or have used contraception – the fact that access would be limited is . . . unacceptable.”

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